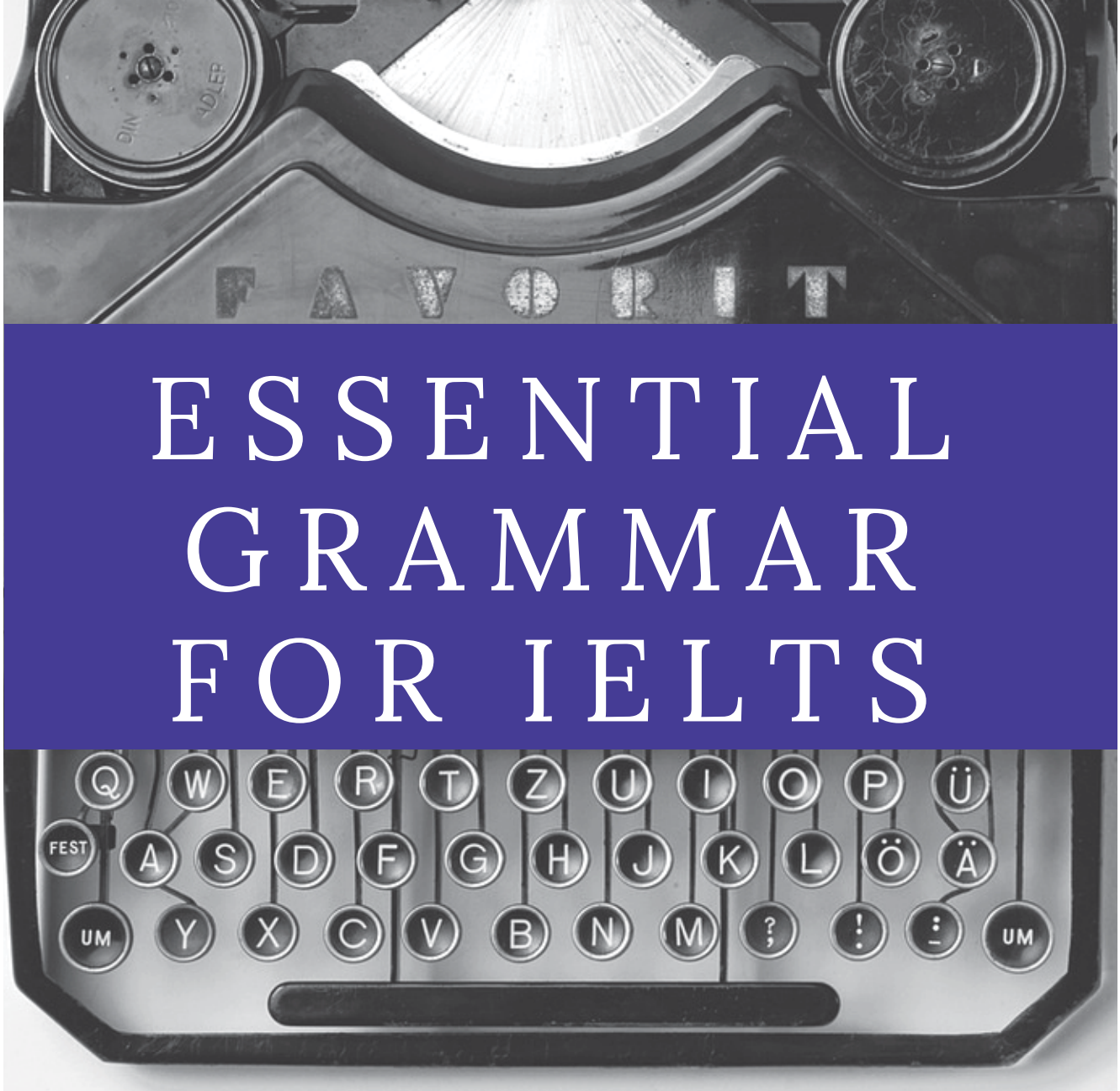



# ESSENTIAL GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

self-study grammar reference

BY SHAMIM

## Why is grammar important?

There is no actual grammar test section in the IELTS test, but you are still graded on this by the examiner in the speaking test and writing test.

These are specifically what you are graded on in each test:

***Writing:***

- *Task Achievement / Response*
- *Coherence and Cohesion*
- *Lexical Resource*
- *Grammatical Range and Accuracy*

***Speaking****:*

- *Fluency and coherence*
- *Lexical Resource*
- *Grammatical Range and Accuracy*
- *Pronunication*

So as you can see, grammar makes up **25%** of each test.

However, it is also important for the *'lexical resource*' part. This is your use of such things as your vocabulary, idiomatic vocabulary, and collocations.

You will be marked down on this if you are making mistakes with such things as **word forms** (e.g. using a noun form instead of a verb form) so this is also grammar related.

This is not to suggest that you should focus only on grammar as the other elements such as fluency in your speaking and your ability to answer the question and organise your response in the writing are a major part of the marking.

But it is clearly important to work on **improving your IELTS grammar**, and this is often the part candidates have the most problems with and the thing that brings their score down.

## How is the grammar for IELTS writing marked exactly?

In order to work on improving your IELTS grammar, it is useful to understand how it is marked.

For each of the parts of the exam highlighed above, you are given a band score (so you get four scores) and these are then averaged to get your overall score for your writing.

For example:

**Writing:**

- Task Achievement / Response - **band 6**
- Coherence and Cohesion - **band 6**

- Lexical Resource - **band 6**
- Grammatical Range and Accuracy - **band 5**

Overall score = **5.5**

The table below shows the two sections on **lexis** and **grammar**. These are adapted from the public band descriptors and show you what the examiner is looking for.

The column on '*grammatical range and accuracy*' is exactly as from the public band descriptors, but the '*lexical resource*' column just picks out the parts related to grammar.

## Writing Band Descriptors for Grammar

| Band | Lexical Resource | Grammatical Range & Accuracy |
|---|---|---|
| **9** | Sophisticaled control of lexical features; rare **minor 'slips'** occur | • Uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as slips. |
| **8** | Produces **rare errors** in spelling and / or word formation | • Uses a wide range of structures<br>• The majority of sentences are error-free<br>• Makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies |
| **7** | **Occasional errors** in word choice, spelling, and / or word formation | • Uses a variety of complex structures<br>• Produces frequent error-free sentences<br>• Has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors |
| **6** | **Some errors** in spelling and / or word formation, but they **do not impede communication** | • Uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms<br>• Makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication |
| **5** | **Noticeable errors** in spelling and / or word formation that may **cause some difficulty** for the reader | • Uses only a limited range of structures<br>• Attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences<br>• May make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader |
| **4** | **Limited control** of word formation and / or spelling; errors **may cause strain** for the reader | • Uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses<br>• Some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty |
| **3** | Errors may **severely distort the message** | • Attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning |
| **2** | Essentially **no control** of word formation and / or spelling | • Cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases |
| **1** | Can only use a few isolated words | • Cannot use sentence forms at all |

## Understanding the descriptors

If you study the table you will notice phrases near the top such as '*rare*', '*occasional*' and *'few*' in reference to word form and grammatical errors.

Near the band 6 range are phrases such as '*some*', and then '*noticeable*' and '*causing difficulty*' as you go down lower.

You can also see that it is important to be:

- Getting your **word forms** right
- Understanding how to write **complex sentences**
- Expanding your **range of grammatical structures** you can use
- Using **grammar accurately** (i.e minimising your error density).

So the pages you'll find here link to explanations and exercises on IELTS grammar to help you improve your score and your grammar.

This is a new section so there are only two IELTS grammar lessons so far.

Start with this one on sentence clauses.

When you understand these, move on to learn more about sentence structure, specifically simple, compound and complex sentences.

This lesson then explains in more detail about complex sentences, which are essential to be able to write correctly for a higher band score.

One type of complex sentence you can learn about here is adverbial clauses.

Follow this link to learn more about modal verbs and how they are commonly used in IELTS for writing and speaking.

# Sentence Clauses

In this grammar lesson we'll look at **sentence clauses**.

You need to be able to write **complex sentences** in order to score higher for your grammatical range - and write them correctly so you don't get marked down on your accuracy!

The building blocks of sentences are '**clauses**' though, so the first step is understanding these.

For example, a band 4 makes only "*rare use of subordinate clauses*" according to the public band descriptors.

This implies you must be making **good use of subordinating clauses** to get a higher score, so you need to know first what sentence clauses are.

## What is a clause in a sentence?

**A clause** is a ***group of words*** with a **(s) subject** and a **(v) verb**.

For example:

**(s) Computers (v) are** important.

*= 1 sentence with 1 clause.*

We can have **two clauses** though i.e. *two groups* of words with a subject and a verb:

**Computers are** important, **but they are** dangerous too.

= 1 sentence with 2 clauses.

How about **three sentence clauses**?

**Computers are** important, **but they can be** dangerous too, **so we must be** careful.

*= 1 sentence with 3 clauses.*

Now let's add a **fourth**!

**Computers are** important, **but they can be** dangerous too, **so we must be** careful **when we use** them.

*= 1 sentence with 4 clauses.*

You'll have noticed then that a sentence is not the same thing as a clause.

**A sentence** is the group of words that **comes between two full-stops** and it must be a **complete thought** that **makes sense**.

So sentence clauses are what build a sentence, and one sentence can have a number of clauses.

## What if there is no subject and verb?

If there is no subject or verb in part of the sentence, then this may be a **phrase**.

For example:

**(p) In many countries around the world, flooding is becoming** more common.

**A phrase** is a group of words *without* a subject and verb (a phrase on its own obviously cannot be a sentence because every sentence has a subject and a verb!).

# Sentence Structure

This page about sentence structure will focus on the differences between simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences and compound-complex sentences.

You **must** know how to correctly write these sentence types for IELTS as the examiner will be looking for them when they grade you for your 'grammatical range'.

Clauses are the buliding blocks of sentences.

So, before you go any further, make sure you understand what clauses are by looking at the previous lesson.

## Sentence Types

There are four types of sentence:

1. *Simple*
2. *Compound*
3. *Complex*
4. *Compound-Complex*

## 1. Simple Sentences

A simple sentence is one clause with a **subject** and **verb**.

***Computers are*** *important in the modern world.*

*Formula = SV*

However, it can have more than one subject and verb:

**2 subjects:**

***Computers*** *and* ***other technological devices are*** *important in the modern world.*

*Formula = SSV*

**2 Verbs:**

***I search*** *for information and* ***play*** *games on my computer.*

*Formula = SVV*

**2 subject and 2 verbs:**

***My brother*** *and* ***I search*** *for information and* ***play*** *games on our computers.*

*Formula = SSVV*

## 2. Compound Sentences

A compound sentence consists of 2 or 3 clauses. It is when simple sentences are joined together.

In this sentence structure, the clauses are joined with the following **coordinating conjunctions**:

***F*** *= for*

***A*** *= and*

***N*** *= nor*

***B*** *= but*

***O*** *= or*

***Y*** *= yet*

***S*** *= so*

The word 'fanboys' is an easy way to remember the different conjuntions that make up compound sentences. Obviously the most common are 'and', 'but', 'or' and 'so'.

Here are some examples of compound sentence structure:

***Computers are** important, **but they can be** dangerous too.*

*Formula = SV but SV*

***Computers are** important, **but they can be** dangerous too, **so we must be** careful.*

*Formula = SV but SV so SV.*

Avoid writing too many clauses as the sentence may get difficult to follow, and you **cannot** use each one **more than once** in a sentence to join clauses.

This is **wrong**:

*Computers are used widely in most countries now, **and** they are a sign of progress, **and** we must ensure everyones has access to them.*

*Incorrect formula = SV and SV and SV. **X***

Two possible corrected versions:

*Computers are used widely in most countries now, **and** they are a sign of progress. We must ensure everyones has access to them.*

*Formula = SV and SV. SV.*

*Computers are used widely in most countries now, **and** they are a sign of progress, **so** must ensure everyones has access to them.*

*Formula = SV and SV so SV.*

**Using semicolons**

There is an instance when you can have a compound sentence structure without a coordinating conjuntion, and this is when you join two clauses with a semicolon. It is used when two ideas are related.

For example:

*Computers are used widely in most countires; they are a sign of progress.*

## 3. Complex Sentences

Complex sentences are more complicated (which is maybe why they are called 'complex'!).

This type of sentence structure is important for IELTS because to get awarded a band 6 or higher for your 'grammatical range and accuracy', you need to demonstrate that you are able to use them.

The **more varied** and the **more accurate** your complex sentences are, the higher the band score for this.

There are different types of complex sentences and these will be looked at in more detail later, so here you are just provided with the basics.

Complex sentences are two (or more) clauses joined together, but they are not joined by 'fanboys' (coordinating conjuntions). They are joined by subordinating conjuntions.

These are subordinating conjunctions:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *after* | *even if* | *unless* |
| *although* | *even though* | *until* |
| *as* | *if* | *when* |
| *as if* | *in order to* | *whenever* |
| *as long as* | *in case* | *whereas* |
| *as much as* | *once* | *where* |
| *as soon as* | *since* | *wherever* |
| *as though* | *so that* | *while* |
| *because* | *that* | |
| *before* | *though* | |

For example:

*People take natural health supplements **even though** they may not have been tested.*

*Our children may not be properly educated **if** we don't spend more on schools.*

*I went to bed **as soon as** he left **because** I was tired.*

These are all **adverbial clauses**. In these types of complex sentence, the second clause can be used to start the sentence.

In this case, a comma is needed in the middle.

***Even though** they may not have been tested, people take natural health supplements.*

***If** we don't spend more on schools, our children may not be properly educated.*

***As soon as** he left, I went to bed **because** I was tired.*

**Noun clauses** and **relative clauses** are also a type of complex sentence structure, but these will be looked at later.

## 4. Compound-Complex Sentences

Compound-complex sentences are the same as complex sentences but they also have a simple (or compound) sentence before or after the 'complex' part.

For example:

*I ate a lot **when** I got home, **but** I was still hungry.*

The part that is underlined is the complex sentence. As you can see, it also has a simple sentences connected to it. It can also have a full compound sentence attached to it:

*I ate a lot **when** I got home, **but** I was still hungry, **so** I went shopping to buy some more food.*

These are compound-complex sentences.

# Complex Sentences

Understanding complex sentences and knowing how to write them is crucial for IELTS.

The examiner will not award you above a band 5 for '**grammatical range and accuracy**' if you cannot write them or if you have a very limited ability to write them.

This is the marking criteria for a band 6 for grammar:

- *Uses a **mix of** simple and **complex sentence forms***
- *Makes **some errors** in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication*

So you must have a mix of complex sentence forms, though some errors in them are acceptable.

If, for example, you learned a couple of complex structures and used the same ones throughout your essay, this would not demonstrate a '*mix*'.

For the higher band scores, you will need to show a greater range and more accuracy.

In order to understand a complex sentence, you need to understand **independent** and **dependent clauses** (look at this previous lesson on clauses if you are unsure what they are).

## What are independent and dependent clauses?

A clause is a **group of words** with a **subject** and **verb**. This is a **dependent clause**:

*...because it was raining so hard.*

If something or someone is 'dependent' then it needs or relies on something else for aid, support, life etc.

For example, a baby is dependent on its mother. Without the mother the baby cannot survive.

In a similar way, a dependent clause cannot 'survive' on its own. It relies on something else. The clause above "*....because it was raining so hard*" cannot be used on its own as a sentence because it does not make sense.

In order to function, it needs an **independent clause**. An independent clause can function on its own as a sentence:

*I took my umbrella.*

This has meaning so is ok on its own. It makes a simple sentence.

If we now join this independent clause with the dependent clause, we have a complex sentence that has meaning:

*I took my umbrella because it was raining so hard.*

## Types of complex sentence

Complex sentences have three types:

1. **Adverbial Clauses**
2. **Relative Clauses**
3. **Noun Clauses**

In the following sections, there is a brief explanation of how to construct each of these with some examples.

However, they are complicated, so lessons explaining them in more detail will follow later on.

## 1) Adverbial Clauses

Adverbial clauses answer questions such as *how? why? when? where?*

They are made by connecting an *independent clause* and a *dependent clause* with a **subordinating conjunction**.

Here are some common subordinating conjunctions that make complex sentences:

| | |
|---|---|
| because | while |
| although | when |
| if | even though |
| until | as |

For example (the subject is in green and the verb in blue).:

*Some **experiments on animals** **give** us the wrong result **because** **animals' bodies** **are** not exactly the same as our own.*

***SV subordinating conjunction SV***

Some experiments on animals give us the wrong result

------ **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** ------

...because animals' bodies are not exactly the same as our own.

------ **DEPENDENT (SUBORDINATING) CLAUSE** ------

In adverbial clauses, however, it is possible to put the dependent clause **before** the independent clause. In fact, more often than not, this is the case.

When you do this though, you **MUST** put a comma after the dependent clause (a comma is not needed when the independent clause comes first):

***Because animals' bodies are** not exactly the same as our own**,** some **experiments on animals give** us the wrong result.*

***subordinating conjunction SV, SV***

Here are some further examples. Notice how in some sentences the dependent clause comes first, in others it is second. This is your choice:

***Even though** he arrived late, he did not apologize.*

*Pollution will get worse **if** car emissions are not reduced.*

***While** the number of people going to Japan increased, the number going to the UK decreased.*

*I don't know **when** he will arrive.*

## 2) Relative Clauses

Like adverbial clauses, relative clauses are made up of an independent clause and a dependent clause.

However, these clauses have a different use. Relative clauses are used to modify a noun. In other words, to give more information about it.

The relative pronouns **who, which, that** and **where** are used to do this, and the relative clause is placed after the noun it is modifying.

For example:

*Animal experimentation, which is legal in most countries, should be banned.*

***Animals experimentation should be*** *banned.*

------ **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** ------

***which is*** *legal in most countries*

------ **DEPENDENT (RELATIVE) CLAUSE** ------

Unlike adverbial clauses, the dependent clause (which is the relative clause) can break up the independent clause - the dependent clause just needs to go after the noun, wherever that is.

Notice also that there are **two Subject-Verb** combinations. This will always be the case with complex sentences as there are **two clauses**.

Here are some more examples. The dependent (relative) clause is in red, the independent clause is in bold, and the noun being modified is underlined.

***A library is a place where you can borrow books.***

***Global warming is a problem that must be solved.***

***Obesity, which is the condition of being overweight, affects millions of children.***

***A person who breaks the law must face serious penalties.***

## 3) Noun Clauses

Noun clauses are probably the most difficult to master of the complex sentences, so we'll focus here on the most common and easiest form which you will probably have used many times. We'll look at them in more detail later.

A noun clause answers the question '**who?**' or '**what**?'. Unlike relative clauses, which come after the noun, noun clauses come **after the verb**.

For example:

***What** do you think about corruption?*

*I think **that corruptions is wrong** and **that those guilty of it should be punished.***

In this example, there are two noun clauses, and they are the **object** of the verb *'think'*.

The noun clauses are the dependent clauses because they do not make sense on their own. They need the independent clause "*I think...*".

***I think***

------ **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** ------

*that **corruption is** wrong*

*that **those guilty of it should be punished***

------ **DEPENDENT (NOUN) CLAUSE** ------

Here are some more examples. The dependent (noun) clause is in red, and the independent clause is in bold:

***I agree that capital punishment must be abolished.***

***I hope that the government intervenes to resolve the situation.***

***I believe that experimentation on animals is unethical.***

It is common to omit *'that'* when speaking. For example, we can say:

*I believe experimentation on animals is unethical.*

However, in formal writing such as IELTS, or academic writing generally, you should include it.

There are further rules and possibilities to use these adverbial, relative and noun clauses, but we will look at them in more detail later.

This lesson provides you with the basics on how they are used.

## IELTS and Complex Sentences

To achieve a good score for your grammatical range, you would need to be able to use a mix of these types of complex sentences, and to use them fairly accurately for a band 6, and very accurately for a band 7 or higher.

For band 7 or higher you will also need to try and use these structures in more complex ways, such as reducing your relative clauses and using nominalizations.

# Adverbial Clauses

In this lesson we will look in more detail at **adverbial clauses**.

These clauses are a type of complex sentence, so it is essential that you are able to use them in your writing and speaking if you want to achieve a good band score.

The examiner will be monitoring your speaking and writing closely to assess how well you know them.

In the table below you can see the most common types of adverbs used to make adverbial clauses.

You can also see what they are used for and some example sentences.

# Types of Adverbial Clause

| **Time Clauses**<br><br>In reference to a period of time or another event |
|---|
| *He arrived **before** I did.*<br>***After** I have finished studying, I intend to work abroad.*<br>***As** the climate gets hotter, sea levels will rise.*<br>*I will keep learning English for **as long as** it is necessary.*<br>***While** I am studying, I usually listen to the radio.*<br>*Rates of obesity increase **when** too much junk food is eaten.*<br>***Since** I started going to fitness, I have lost 5 kilos.*<br>*I will keep learning English **until** I am upper intermediate.* |
| **Conditional Clauses** |

| |
|---|
| Expressing a hypothesis or condition, real or imagined |
| *__If__ we clone humans, it may have terrible consequences.*<br>*What would you buy __if__ you won the lottery?*<br>*Our food will not be safe __unless__ GM crops are banned.* |
| **Reason Clauses**<br>To explain why |
| *My English is not improving __because__ I am not studying enough.*<br>*__Since__ the govenment cut spending, poverty has increased.*<br>*Pollution is increasing __as__ there are too many cars.* |
| **Purpose Clauses**<br>To show the purpose of doing something |
| *I am studying IELTS in __order to__ attend university abroad.*<br>*He went to the gym __so that__ he could lose weight.* |
| **Concession Clauses**<br>To show contrast between two statements, or surprise. |
| *__Although__ e-readers are popular, most people still prefer books.*<br>*The Minister wants to incease taxes __though__ his party disagrees.*<br>*__Even though__ I studied every day, I didn't get the score I needed (surprising)*<br>*Internet usage increased, __while__ phone usage decreased.**<br>*__Whereas__ you have a lot of time to study, I do not.** |
| **Place**<br>To talk about location of position |
| *__Wherever__ he goes, I will go.*<br>*I am not sure __where__ I put my pen.* |

## Rules for Adverbial Clauses

Remember that adverbial clauses are made up of two clauses - an **independent clause** and a **dependent clause** (look at these lessons on sentence clauses and complex sentences again if you are not sure what clauses are).

**1) Switching the Clauses**

The first thing to note is that the independent and dependent clauses can be switched around:

*After I have finished studying, **I intend to work abroad.***
*(Dependent Clause + **Independent Clause**)*

***I intend to work abroad** after I have finished studying.*
***(Independent Clause** + Dependent Clause)*

In all of the sentences in the table above, the clauses can be switched around.

**2) Commas**

Note though that if you switch them around and put the **dependent clause first**, a comma **must** come at the end of the dependent clause:

*After I have finished studying, **I intend to work abroad.***
*(Comma)*

***I intend to work abroad** after I have finished studying.*
*(No Comma)*

This might seem like a minor point but it is quite important in your writing. Complex sentences can sometimes get confusing if commas are missing as it can become unclear where one clause ends and the other begins.

If any of your sentences are confusing, this will definitely reduce your score.

**'While' and 'Whereas' are execptions to this rule because they **do** have commas even when they appear in the middle of the sentence.*

**3) Meanings**

Even though certain adverbs have been grouped together in the adverbial clauses table, this does not mean that they are all synomyms for each other.

Some you can interchange with each other without changing the meaning. For instance, 'since', 'as' and 'because' all have the same meaning and you can choose which one you want to use. But some you cannot.

For example, look at these conditional adverbs:

***I will go** if you go.*

***I will go** unless you go.*

The word 'unless' does not work in the second sentence. It has to be changed:

***I won't go** unless you go.*

Now it has the same meaning.

Similarly, 'although', 'even though', and 'though' are all synonyms of each other and can be interchanged, but 'while' and 'whereas' canot always be swapped with them.

So you need to practice each individual word and check how it is used.

## A Common Mistake

A common mistake with adverbial clauses (and other complex sentences) is to write **fragments**.

A fragment is an incomplete sentence:

***My English is not improving**. Because I am not studying enough.*

A dependent clause (the second one in this case) cannot be a sentence on its own. By placing a full-stop after "improving", this has turned the second clause into a sentence fragment.

A dependent clause **must** have an independent clause attached to it:

***My English is not improving** because I am not studying enough.*

When you check your work, you should check your complex sentences and check that you have not written any fragments.

## Examples in Context

Look at this sample essay. The adverbial clauses are coloured, with the independent clauses in green (and italics) and the dependent clauses in red (and underlined). The adverbs are shaded in yellow.

***Some people believe the aim of university education is to help graduates get better jobs. Others believe there are much wider benefits of university education for both individuals and society.***

***Discuss both views and give your opinion.***

These days, more and more people are making the choice to go to university. While some people are of the opinion that the only purpose of a university education is to improve job prospects, ***others think that society and the individual benefit in much broader ways*.**

It is certainly true that one of the main aims of university is to secure a better job. The majority of people want to improve their future career prospects and ***attending university is one of the best ways to do this*** as it increases a persons marketable skills and attractiveness to potential employers. In addition, further education is very expensive, so ***most people would not consider it*** if it would not provide them with a more secure future and a higher standard of living. Thus job prospects are very important.

However, there are other benefits for individuals and society. Firstly, ***the independence of living away from home is a benefit*** because it helps the students develop better social skills and improve as a person. A case in point is that many students will have to leave their families, live in halls of residence and meet new friends. As a result, their maturity and confidence will grow enabling them to live more fulfilling lives. Secondly, society will gain from the contribution that the graduates can make to the economy. We are living in a very competitive world, so ***countries need educated people*** in order tocompete and prosper.

Therefore, I believe that although a main aim of university education is to get the best job, ***there are clearly further benefits***. If we continue to promote and encourage university attendance, ***it will lead to a better future for individuals and society***.

It is good to have a variety of sentences types. and as you can see, there are a mix of adverbial clauses which demonstrates that the candidate has a good grammatical range.

Try writing your own essay. When you have finished, go through your work and highlight the adverbial clauses, identifying the adverb and the dependent and independent clauses.

Is there a mix? Are they used correctly with subjects and verbs present in each clause and no fragments?

# Relative Clauses

**Relative clauses** are a type of complex sentence.

It essential that you know how to write complex sentences if you want to do well in the IELTS writing test.

Here are some examples used in an **IELTS task 1**:

*Consumption of pizzas was far higher than hamburgers, which were consumed approximately 5 times a year.*

*Community contributions, which were the second largest revenue source, brought in 10.4% of overall income, and this was followed by program revenue, at 2.2%.*

Here are some examples from **task 2 essays**:

*CO2, which damages the ozone layer, comes from several sources, but the most problematic are those coming from the burning of fossil fuels from power plants.*

*Email and social networking sites such as Facebook and MSN have created online communities that are global in scale.*

Relative clauses can refer to:

*People = who / that*

*Things = which / that*

*Places = where*

Below are some **essential rules** about these types of clauses that you must know.

The rules refer to independent and dependent clauses, so make sure you understand these first.

## 8 things you must know about relative clauses:

1) Relative clauses **modify nouns**, and they must come **after** the noun they are modifying:

*noun* *relative clause*
***The car**, which is my father's, **is in the garage.***

*noun* *relative clause*
***The car is in the garage**, which is locked.*

*In the first sentence, the relative clause is referring to "the car", so it comes after that noun. In the second sentence it is referring to "the garage".*

2) There must be an **independent** and **dependent** clause:

*Ind Clause* *Dep Clause* *Ind Clause*
***The car**, / which is my father's, / **is in the garage.***

3) As there are two clauses, there must be a **subject** and **verb** in each:

*S* *S* *V* *V*
***The car**, / which is my father's, / **is in the garage.***

*This is because a relative clause is two simple sentences joined together. In other words:*

*S* *V*
***The car is in the garage.***

*S* *V*
*The car is my fathers.*

4) If you miss part of one of the clauses out, or one of the subjects or verbs, you will create a **fragment** (an incomplete sentence):

*S S V*
***The car** / which is my father's.*

*This is incorrect as there must be a full dependent and independent clause.*

5) The verb in the relative clause must **agree** (i.e. singular subject takes singular verb) with the noun it is modifying:

*Subj (sing) verb (sing)*
***The car**, / which is my father's, / **is in the garage.***

6) If the information is **'extra**' information, there are commas:

***The car**, which is my father's, **is in the garage.***

*The relative clause is not identifying the noun, it is just extra information about who owns it.*

7) If the information is '**essential**', there are no commas:

***The car** which is in front of the house **is mine.***

*This is identifying which car, so it is essential. There are probably other cars, so without the relative clause we will not know which car is being talked about.*

*In other words, if you said "**the car is mine**", this would not help us. Which car?*

8) With 'essential' relative clauses, **'that**' can replace 'who' or 'which':

***The car** that is in front of the house **is mine.***

***The police have not found the person** that stole my car.*

# Noun Clause

A **Noun clause** is another type of complex sentence that you are likely to use when you do any form of writing or speaking, so you need to be aware of them for IELTS.

And remember that to score at a band 6 or above for the **grammatical range and accuracy** criteria in the IELTS writing marking, you must show that you are able to use complex sentences with at least some accuracy.

For a **band 6** you may still make some errors with them, but errors are a lot less likely for someone scoring a **band 7** or higher.

This of course does not mean you have to them in your writing! There are lots of other types of complex sentence, but it is likely you will use some.

For your speaking too, you need to be able to use a mix of complex structures with some flexibility.

## What is a Noun Clause?

If you don't know what a *noun* or a *noun phrase* is, you should check these out before you continue with this lesson.

Also, make sure you know what sentence clauses are and check out this lesson on complex sentences if you are not sure of the difference between **dependent** and **independent clauses**.

This is a noun clause definition:

> *A group of words (which do what a noun does) with a subject and a verb that can be a subject, an object, or an object of a preposition.*

Here are 4 common types of noun clauses (NC):

1. **Subject NC**
2. **Direct Object NC**
3. **Object of Preposition NC**
4. **Subject as Complement NC**

It is a **dependent clause** which means it must also have an independent clause, but we will look at this further when we analyse each type.

Before we look at these in turn, let's look at how this type of clause begins.

## Starting the Clause

They start with a **relative** or **adverb pronoun**. These are the words that commonly commence such a clause:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| where | why | if | that | when | whether |
| who | whom | which | what | how | how (adj) |
| **- *"ever"* words** | | | | | |
| wherever | whomever | whenever | whatever | | |
| whichever | whoever | however | however (adj) | | |

## Types of Clauses

Now we'll look at the different types. Before we do this, take a look at these noun clause examples (the whole clause is in bold and the relative or adverb pronoun is in red). Each different type is shown:

| *Subject NC* |
| --- |
| **How governments are fighting global warming** is being scrutinised by the media. |
| *Direct Object NC* |
| Most people believe **that obesity cannot be reduced just by reducing calorie intake.** |
| *Object of Preposition NC* |
| He talked with **whichever person arrived first.** |
| *Subject as complement NC* |
| It is important **that the individuals do everything they can to help educate their children.** |

## 1. Subject Noun Clauses

For these explanations, the **subjects** will be in green, the **verbs** in blue, and the **objects** in red.

In this type of sentence the NC (underlined) is the **subject** of the sentence:

**What causes so many difficulties in the IELTS test** **is** the writing section.

So looking at the whole sentence above, we have a **subject**, a **verb** and an **object**.

But remember that a NC is a 'clause', so it too must have a subject and a verb (and possibly an object):

**What causes** so many difficulties in the IELTS test is the writing section.

In the above example, the adverb pronoun ("*what*") is the subject. It does not have to be as in this example, where "I" is the subject:

**Whether I go or not** is up to me.

***Important:*** Note that the verb "*is*" is singular. A NC is counted as a singular subject, so it takes a singular verb.

## 2. Direct Object Noun Clauses

When the clause is the direct object, then it comes **after the verb** in the independent clause:

This history book **describes** **how England became the first industrialised nation.**

Again, remember that the NC has a **subject** and a **verb** (and possibly an **object**):

This history book describes **how England became the first industrialised nation.**

A common NC you will know from IELTS is the **"that" clause**, following verbs such as "*think*", "*believe*" and "*feel*", for example as in this Task 2 essay question:

A growing number of people feel that animals should not be exploited by people and that they should have the same rights as humans, while others argue that humans must employ animals to satisfy their various needs, including uses for food and research.

Discuss both views and give your opinion.

And you may then give your opinion:

Personally, I do not believe that it is necessary to exploit animals for our own satisfaction.

Note that if you are speaking it is fine to leave "*that*" out of the sentence (this is then a *reduced* noun clause).

*I believe students should not have to wear a uniform.*

But for formal writing such as you do in IELTS you should keep the "*that*" in the sentence.

*I believe **that** students should not have to wear a uniform.*

## 3. Object of the Preposition Noun Clauses

In this case, the NC comes **after a preposition**:

My Aunt is very chatty. She speaks to **whoever will listen**!

And here it is with the **subject** and **verb** of the NC highlighted:

My Aunt is very chatty. She speaks to **whoever will listen**!

## 4. Subject as Complement Noun Clauses

These type of sentences have the following structure:

**It + be + adjective + (NOUN CLAUSE: that + S + V)**

It is important that the government tackles obesity.

It is essential that children have enough leisure time.

Some exercises will be added shortly so you can practice with these types of clauses, so keep an eye on the page.

# Modal Verbs for IELTS

This IELTS lesson is about modal verbs and how they can be used to improve your writing (though of course they are also used in your speaking in the same way).

You are likely to use these a lot in your academic writing for task 2, particularly if you are writing an essay which needs to give solutions to a problem.

They are also important to help in clarifying the certainty with which you are making a point, which is important for your writing.

The examiner will expect you to be competent in using these to award you a higher band score.

**What are they?**

Modal Verbs are used commonly in English to add further information to the main verb.

They are auxiliary or 'helping' verbs, which means they cannot be used on their own but must be used with the main verb.

| Modal Verbs | Main Verb (Bare Infinitive) | Sentence Examples |
|---|---|---|
| May<br>Might<br>Can<br>Could<br>Shall<br>Should<br>Will<br>Would<br>Must | go | • She can swim<br>• Can she swim?<br>• She can not swim |
| **'Semi' Modal Verbs** | **(Infinitive)** | **Sentence Examples** |
| Ought<br>Need<br>Have | to go | • She has to go<br>• Does she have to go?<br>• She doesn't have to go |

## How are they used?

These verbs are used with a main verb and are followed by the *bare* infinitive (*bare* means no "to").

The exceptions are 'ought',' need' and 'have' which are followed by the infinitive (with "to").

## Common Use in IELTS Task 2

Three important functions of modal verbs when you are writing or speaking for IELTS are:

1. discussing *degrees of certainty*
2. making *suggestions*.
3. *hypothetical* situations

### *1) Degrees of Certainty*

***Will, may, might*** and ***could*** are common to make logical deductions about a situation or the future, which you often need to do in task 2:

*Children with no father as a role model **will** become criminals. (100%)*

*Children with no father as a role model **may** become criminals. (Possible)*

*Children with no father as a role model **could** become criminals. (Possible)*

Which of these sentences do you think is incorrect?

Hopefully you worked out that the first one is wrong. This is a common mistake to see in IELTS essays.

The grammar is ok, but it is not possible to conclude that *all* children with no father as a role model will become criminals!

Be careful when you are making assessments in this way.

'*Will*'' is 100% going to happen, so avoid using it to make generalizations about everybody/everything unless you know it is 100% true. (There are other ways to make it less certain e.g. "will possibly").

When you are writing IELTS essays, it's unusual that you will have evidence with you or that you can use to show 100% what you are saying is true.

So the second two are better in this situation.

### *2) Suggestions*

**Must, should, ought to, have to** and **could** are often used to make suggestions for solving a problem. It is common in task 2 to get a question asking you to discuss a problem and suggest solutions.

*Governments **must/have to/need to** take action to tackle global warming. (strong obligation)*

*Parents **should/ought to** stop their children watching too much television. (Strong suggestion)*

*Individuals **could** recycle more (possibility).*

Take a look at this model essay on global warming and note how modal verbs are used in the second body paragraph to discuss the solutions.

### *3) Hypothetical Situations*

It is common to use **would** and **could** to discuss hypothetical situations.

If something is hypothetical, this means in effect it has not happened. You are discussing an unreal situation in the future or imagining something.

For example:

*If the government spent more money on hospitals, people **would** be healthier.*

It is something that has not happened and you don't know if it will.

See this model essay on human cloning and notice the use of *would* and *could* throughout the essay.

Cloning of human beings has not happened yet, so it is a hypothetical situation

It may also be used in your speaking - see this lesson on hypothetical situations for part 2 of the speaking test.

# Subject Verb Agreement

It is important to understand **subject verb agreement** for IELTS.

If you are making errors with this in your writing or speaking, it will be very noticable as it is a very basic error.

For example, take a look at this paragraph which has **errors** with subject verb agreement:

*Some people argue that leaving people in prison for a long time **mean** that they will mix with other criminals and so their character will not improve. The alternative **are** community service. This gives an offender the opportunity to give something positive back to society, and so it may **improves** their character. Also, the government could focus its resources on the causes of crime, which would **leads** to less crime in the future.*

## The Basic Rules

These are the basic rules of subject verb agreement:

1) For a **singular third person** (he / she / it) in the present tense, the verb must have an *-s* ending:

| Singular | Plural |
|---|---|
| I take | We take |
| You take | You take |
| He / She / It takes | They take |

***Singular:** He takes the bus to work every morning.*

***Plural:** His family take the train.*

2) Different formations are used for the **irregular verb 'to be'**, but an *-s* is still used for the third person singular

| Present | |
|---|---|
| **Singular** | **Plural** |
| I am | We are |
| You are | You are |
| He / She / It is | They are |
| **Past** | |
| **Singular** | **Plural** |
| I was | We were |
| You were | You were |
| He / She / It was | They were |

***Singular:*** ***He*** *was on the bus by 9am*

***Plural:*** ***His children*** *were on the train by 9.30am.*

However, these are just the basic rules.

There are other things that are important to understand in order to ensure you are using subject verb agreement correctly in all contexts and some things that are confusing.

We'll look at some of these now.

## There is and There are

When you use *there is* and *there are*, *'there*' is never the subject. The subject is the word that comes after the verb.

Therefore, you need to look at that word to decide if the verb is singular or plural.

*There* ***are*** ***several reasons*** *why we must tackle the problem of global warming.*

*There* ***is*** ***one main reason*** *we must tackle global warming.*

What sometimes confuses people is when there are several nouns after the verb. It is common to make the mistake of using a plural verb. In fact, the verb should agree with only the first noun.

Take a look at this simple example:

*There is **a pen**, some pencils, and a rubber on the table.*

*There are **pens**, one pencil and some rubbers on the table.*

In each of these examples, you just need to look at the first noun to decide if the subject is singular or plural - you can ignore the ones after this.

## Separated Subjects

Another common mistake is when the **subject is separated** from the verb by a prepositional phrase, relative clause, or reduced relative clause.

A mistake is to make the verb agree with the last noun in the phrase or clause rather than the subject of the sentence:

***Incorrect:** Improving the situation of people in **cities** are very important.*

***Correct: Improving the situation** (of people in cities) is very important.*

It should not agree with '*cities*' as this is part of the prepositional phrase.

Here are some more examples of correct subject verb agreement (the phrase or clause that should be ignored for purposes of agreement is in brackets):

***Obesity** (in children) is a growing concern.*

***The decision** (made by the country's leaders after numerous meetings) was definitely the right one.*

*The new **roads** (which the government has built) have not reduced congestion.*

## Expressions of Quantity

Another difficult area with subject verb agreement is dealing with **quantities**.

When a quantity word is followed by a prepositional phrase, it can follow the rules above i.e. the verb agrees with the subject (the quantity):

***One** of the new teachers is from India.*

***None** of the candidates is likely to get my vote. (in spoken English the plural form is commonly used - 'are likely')*

***Five** of my freinds are coming with me on holiday.*

However, for some quantity phrases you do need to refer to the noun in the prepositional phrase to decide if the verb is singular or plural:

| | Singular | Plural |
|---|---|---|
| **A lot of...** | A lot of the meat is fresh. | A lot of the vegetables are organic |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **All of the...** | All of the meat is fresh. | All of the vegetables are organic |
| **Some of the...** | Some of the meat is fresh. | Some of the vegetables are organic |
| **One-half (third etc) of...** | One-half of the room is empty | One-third of the cars on the road use unleaded fuel. |

## Neither and Either

With these phrases, the verb must agree with the noun that is **closest to the verb**:

*Neither the child nor her **parents** are at the school.*

*Neither the parents nor their **child** is at the school.*

*Either my brother or my **sisters** usually help me.*

*Either my sisters or my **brother** usually helps me.*

## Indefinite Pronouns as subjects

A common mistake is made in subject verb agreement with **indefinite pronouns** as people often assume they must take a plural verb because they refer to more than one thing.

Here are some common examples of indefinite pronouns:

| **every-** | **some-** | **any-** | **no-** |
|---|---|---|---|
| everyone | someone | anyone | no one |
| everybody | somebody | anybody | nobody |
| everything | something | anything | nothing |

***Everyone** seems to be nervous about the exam.*

***Something** needs to be done about the increasing rate of crime.*

*Accoring to the news, **Nobody** is directly responsible for the problems.*

## Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are always followed by the **bare infinitive**, so in this case the third person singular no longer takes a singular verb:

***Incorrect: He** will takes the bus to work.*

***Correct: He** will take the bus to work.*

***Incorrect: It** would seems that she is unwell.*

***Correct:** **It** would seem that she is unwell.*

## Gerunds

Gerunds (*verbs that function as nouns by adding -ing*) always take a **singular subject**. Remember to look at the gerund, not the noun that may come between the gerund and the verb:

***Feeding** the poor in developing countries is what most aid is used for.*

***Running** my businesses takes up most of my time.*

***Typing** is a skill that I have not yet mastered.*

# Gerunds

Gerunds are an important grammar form to understand and to be able to use effectively in the IELTS test and in your English more generally.

They are nouns and they are formed by adding *-ing* onto a *verb*.

Take a look at this paragraph - the gerunds are in red.

Learning vocabulary is very important for the IELTS test. Though it is important not to neglect the other skills of speaking, reading, writing and listening, knowing a broad range of words will help you with all the other parts of the test. Unfortunately, many students dislike spending the time that is needed to fully understand each word, but not taking vocabulary seriously could be a big mistake.

Here are examples of the words before and after they are changed:

| *Verb* | *Gerund* |
|---|---|
| Learn | Learning |
| Speak | Speaking |
| Read | Reading |
| Write | Writing |
| Listen | Listening |
| Know | Knowing |
| Spend | Spending |
| Take | Taking |

## How are they used?

### *As a subject*

- *Walking **is** a good form of exercise*

Notice that a gerund takes a **singular verb** ('*is*' in this case). You must use the singular verb, even if there are **multiple objects**:

- *Eating bananas, apples and oranges everyday **is** good for you.*

However, if there is more than one, then the plural verb is used:

- *Walking and swimming **are** both good forms of exercise.*

To make the sentence **negative**, '*not*' is placed before the gerund.

- *Not exercising regularly is dangerous for your health.*

### *As a direct object*

- *Some people like swimming to keep fit.*

### *As subject complements after the verb "to be"*

- *A good way to improve your English is watching American TV series.*

This sentence is also commonly written this way:

- *Watching American TV series is a good way to improve your English.*

### *Objects of prepositions*

In this usage, it is after the preposition:

- *Another method of learning English is to read lots of fiction books.*

## Common verbs before gerunds

If you wish to put two verbs together, then the second verb will need to be a gerund and / or infinitive.

For example, you can't say this:

*We always finish eat very late.*

*We always finish to eat very late.*

If "*finish*" is followed by another verb, it needs to be a gerund.

*We always finish eating very late.*

There is no grammatical reason for this as such, so you just need to learn the verbs and practice writing some sentences with those verbs.

Remember, certain verbs should be followed by **an infinitive**, not a gerund, and some verbs can be followed by either. For example:

*I like to swim (verb + infinitive)*

*Or*

*I like swimming (verb + gerund)*

Go to the infinitives grammar lesson to learn more and the gerund and infinitive lesson to learn about verbs that take both.

Here is a list of verbs that are very commonly followed by a gerund (not an infinitive):

## Verbs Commonly Followed By A Gerund

| VERB | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|---|
| **appreciate** | I appreciate you taking the time out to see me. |
| **avoid** | You should avoid drinking sugary drinks. |
| **consider** | The government considered banning fox hunting. |
| **delay** | I delayed paying the fine for speeding. |
| **deny** | He denied committing the crime. |
| **discuss** | We discussed sending the children to another school. |
| **dislike** | Most people dislike getting up early. |
| **enjoy** | I enjoy having a day off. |
| **finish** | We always finish eating very late. |
| **involve** | My job involves moving around the country a lot. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **miss** | I miss seeing my family everyday. |
| **postpone** | We postponed marrying until we had the money. |
| **practice** | He practiced hitting the ball against the wall. |
| **quit** | I will quit smoking next month. |
| **recall** | I can't ever recall shouting at my children. |
| **recommend** | This book recommends studying for IELTS everyday. |
| **resent** | I resent my manager firing me from my job. |
| **risk** | I wouldn't risk taking IELTS before you are prepared. |
| **stop** | If you stop worrying, you will perform better. |
| **suggest** | She suggested studying in Australia. |

## A Verb After a Preposition

If you place a verb after a preposition, the gerund form is used.

Here are some examples:

*I am interested in learning a new language.*
*There are many advantages of taking a sabbatical from work.*
*I passed my exams without trying too hard.*
*I'm worried about sitting for the IELTS test.*
*I got a band 7 by studying very hard.*
*I was shocked upon hearing the news.*
*I'm sorry for talking so loud.*

The best way to learn these is to understand collocations - words that commonly go together.

For example, we always talk about being "*interested in*" something, or the "*advantages of*" something.

## Talking about an activity

We also use them to talk about an activity with the word '*go*'.

For example:

*I wanted to go jogging but my friend said he'd prefer to goswimming instead.*

## With reduced adverb clauses

They are also used to make reduced adverbial clauses. Below are some examples.

However, there are various rules for reducing adverbial clauses so you should make sure you understand these rules before attempting them.

We will look at the rules for this in another lessson.

*While I study, I listen to music.*

***Reduced:*** *While studying, I listen to music*

*Before I went out, I turned the lights off.*

***Reduced:*** *Before going out, I turned the lights off*

*I locked the doors after I got home.*

***Reduced:*** *I locked the doors after getting home.*

*Because I was tired, I could not study any longer.*

***Reduced:*** *Being tired, I could not study any longer.*

As mentioned above, you should avoid using them until you have studied and practiced them, otherwise you may make mistakes.

# Infinitives

Infinitives are created by *to + verb*.

It is important that you can use them correctly in your IELTS speaking and writing or when you use English more generally.

We have already looked at gerunds, which are verbs ending in *–ing*(which makes them nouns).

Take a look at this paragraph. The infinitives are in red.

***To improve*** *my IELTS score, I joined a writing class in a college in my home town. I wanted* ***to make*** *sure that my grammar was as good as it could be. The teachers helped me* ***to understand*** *some complex grammatical points. It is impossible* ***to know*** *everything in a short time, but I improved lot, and I would really like* ***to thank*** *them for what they did.* ***To help*** *me like this was very kind.*

All these are being used in different ways. In this lesson we'll examine them further.

## The Grammar

The infinitive form of the verb means that it **does not take a tense**. It is the bare form of the verb, but with 'to' before it.

Here are some examples

*to go*
*to see*
*to wait*
*to manipulate*
*to consider*
*to amend*

A common mistake in writing is to think of it like a finite verb (a verb that has a subject and takes a tense). It does not change its form.

Here is an example of a common mistake with the infinitive:

*It took me five hours **to reached** the destination.*

The person has made the infinitive verb, *reach*, in the past tense. Only the main verb (*take* in this case) can be given a tense.

This is how it should be written:

*It took me five hours **to reach** the destination.*

## How are they used?

The table below explains some of their common uses. This is followed by some tables with examples.

| *As direct objects* |
|---|
| When an infinitive is used as a **direct object**, it is placed after the verb: |

*I wanted to make sure that my grammar was as good as it could be.*
*I decided to study abroad, but my parents are refusing to pay.*

| *To show purpose* |
|---|
| They are sometimes used as a reduction of the phrase '**in order to**'. |

*In order to improve my IELTS score, I joined a writing class in a college in my home town.*
*To improve my IELTS score, I joined a writing class in a college in my home town.*
*I joined the exercise class in order to lose weight.*

*I joined the exercise class to lose weight.*

*As a subject*

*To help me like this was very kind.*

*To get involved in charity work is a very noble cause.*

However, note that the use of the gerund in these structures is much more common:

*Helping me like this was very kind.*

*Getting involved in charity work is a very noble cause.*

If you do see an infinitive at the beginning of a sentence, it is much more likely to be showing purpose i.e replacing *in order to*.

*With phrases beginning with 'it' (it + be + infinitive)*

*It is impossible to be perfect in a short time.*

*(Adjective + Infinitive)*

*It could be a mistake to leave my job.*

*(Noun + Infinitive)*

*With the verb 'take' (it + take + noun + infinitive)*

*It took me five hours to reach the destination.*

*It takes a lot of concentration to read this book.*

*After certain adjectives*

*My brother was surprised to see me.*

*I was careful not to speak too loudly.*

## Common Verbs before infinitives

If you wish to put two verbs together, then the second verb will need to be an **infinitive and / or gerund**.

For example, you *can't* say this:

*He hoped see me again.*

*He hoped seeing me again.*

If "*hope*" is followed by another verb, it needs to be an infinitive:

*He hoped to see me again.*

Remember, certain verbs should be followed by **an infinitive**, not a gerund, and some verbs can be followed by either. For example:

*I like to swim (verb + infinitive)*

*Or*

*I like swimming (verb + gerund)*

Follow this link to see the lesson on gerunds or learn when you can use the gerund and infinitive.

Here is a list of verbs that are very commonly followed by an infinitive (not a gerund):

## Verbs Commonly Followed by an Infinitive

| VERB | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|---|
| **afford** | I can't afford to pay for IELTS lessons. |
| **agree** | He agreed to postpone his test. |
| **appear** | Obesity appears to be getting worse. |
| **ask** | He asked me to go with him. |
| **claim** | She claimed to have the answer to the question. |
| **decide** | My partner and I decided to move house next year. |
| **demand** | I demand to see the manager! |
| **deserve** | I didn't deserve to get a 7.5 as I studied very little. |
| **expect** | She expected to get a band 5 but she got a 6. |
| **fail** | Her son failed to win the race, but he came second. |
| **forget** | I forgot to take the rubbish out last night. |
| **hesitate** | She wouldn't hesitate to help a friend in need. |
| **hope** | I hope to leave by 7pm. |
| **intend** | The government intends to hold an election in June. |
| **learn** | I've learnt to take each day as it comes. |
| **manage** | She managed to change her doctors appointment. |
| **mean** | Sorry, I didn't mean to arrive so late. |
| **need** | I need to get a band 7 to get into Australia. |
| **offer** | I offered to drive her to the airport. |
| **plan** | I plan to emigrate to the UK this year. |
| **prepare** | He's prepared to risk everything by investing in gold. |
| **pretend** | The boy pretended to fall over. |
| **promise** | The army general promised not to stage a coup. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **refuse** | He is refusing to take the medicine. |
| **seem** | She seemed to be ok yesterday, but now she is worse. |
| **tend** | I tend to find that warmer weather makes me feel better. |
| **threaten** | The country threatened to invade its neighbour. |
| **wait** | I can't wait to go on holiday. |
| **want** | The teacher wanted the students to pass. |

The next tables show you some common ways that adjectives and nouns are used with the infinitive.

## Common adjectives preceded by it + be and followed by infinitive

| ADJECTIVE | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|---|
| **bad** | It is bad to gossip about your friends. |
| **dangerous** | It is dangerous to drive too fast. |
| **difficult** | It was difficult to do well in the IELTS reading test. |
| **easy** | It is very easy to forget important grammar points in a test. |
| **fun** | It isn't always fun to learn English. |
| **hard** | It is always hard to remain focused on your goals in life. |
| **important** | It is important to believe in your abilities. |
| **impossible** | It will be impossible for the charity to help everyone. |
| **interesting** | It is interesting to find out about another country. |
| **necessary** | It is sometimes necessary to change your plans. |
| **relaxing** | It is relaxing to lie in the sun. |

## Common nouns preceded by it + be and followed by infinitive

| NOUN | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|---|
| **a good idea** | It isn't a good idea to study late at night. |
| **a bad idea** | It is a bad idea to spend too long on IELTS Task 1. |
| **a mistake** | It is a mistake to say very little in the IELTS speaking test. |
| **a pity** | It was a pity to leave so early. |
| **a shame** | It was a shame to break up. |
| **a waste** | It will be a waste to throw the food away. |

## Common adjectives followed by infinitives

| ADJECTIVE | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|---|
| **ashamed** | I'm ashamed to admit that I stole the bike. |
| **bound** | He is bound (certain) to arrive late - he always does. |
| **careful** | He was careful not to wake the baby. |
| **excited** | I'm excited to join the local football team. |
| **glad** | I'm glad to hear that you are feeling better. |
| **happy** | The developer was happy to reduce the price of the house. |
| **lucky** | I'm lucky to have so many friends. |
| **pleased** | The nurse was pleased to know he was well again. |
| **proud** | She was proud to be seen with her father. |
| **relieved** | The police were relieved to arrest the criminal at last. |
| **reluctant** | I'm reluctant to take the IELTS test again. |
| **sad** | He was sad to see his brother leave. |
| **shocked** | I was shocked to find out he had been fired. |
| **sorry** | We'll all be sorry to see you go. |
| **surprised** | They were surprised to hear he is 50 years old. |
| **sure** | He's sure to win first prize. |
| **willing** | I'm willing to bet you can get a high IELTS score. |

# Gerund and Infinitive

Choosing between the gerund and infinitive when they are the **object of the sentence** can cause a lot of difficulties for students of English.

If they are the object of the sentence, that means they **come after the verb**.

Make sure you look at the previous lessons on gerunds and infinitives to see which one to use after which verb.

As you will remember from those lessons, some verbs can **only be followed by the gerund** (not the infinitive) and some verbs can **only be followed by the infinitive** (not the gerund).

Here are some examples but go to the gerund and infinitive lessons for more examples:

| Examples of verbs that are followed by a gerund | Examples of verbs that are followed by an infinitive |
|---|---|
| ~~*I kept to phone the office*~~*.*<br>*I kept phoning the office.*<br>~~*We appriate to hear from you*~~*.*<br>*We appreciate hearing from you.*<br>~~*He denies to take the phone*~~*.*<br>*He denies taking the phone.*<br>~~*They avoid to debate the subect*~~*.*<br>*They avoid debating the subject.* | ~~*They agreed signing it*~~*.*<br>*They agreed to sign it.*<br>~~*He expected losing*~~*.*<br>*He expected to lose.*<br>~~*She managed getting a promotion*~~*.*<br>*She managed to get a promotion.*<br>~~*We pretended laughing*~~*.*<br>*We pretended to laugh.* |

## Verbs followed by either infinitives or gerunds

However, in some cases you can use either the gerund or the infinitive. Here are some common verbs that can be followed by either:

| VERB | EXAMPLE SENTENCE |
|---|---|
| **attempt** | I attempted to wake up early. |
| | I attempted waking up early. |
| **begin** | I usually begin to feel tired at 10pm |
| | I usually begin feeling tired at 10pm |
| **cease** | The government ceased to talk about the war. |
| | The government ceased talking about the war. |
| **continue** | The police continued to harrass him. |
| | The police continued harrassing him. |
| **hate** | I hate to go to work. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | I hate going to work. |
| **like** | Most people like to travel abroad. |
| | Most people like traveling abroad. |
| **love** | They love to eat at nice restaurants. |
| | They love eating at nice restaurants. |
| **prefer** | The electorate prefers to vote in September. |
| | The electorate prefers voting in September. |
| **propose** | I propose to delay the company merger until next year. |
| | I propose delaying the company merger until next year. |
| **start** | I will start to study next week. |
| | I will start studying next week. |
| **try** | The children tried to reduce their intake of sugar. |
| | The children tried reducing their intake of sugar. |

# Parallel Structure

**Parallel structure** is when you balance the grammatical structures of words, clauses, sentences, or phrases in your writing.

They are important for any kind of writing and speaking in order to maintain coherency.

In this particular lesson we'll look at ***parallel words and phrases***.

We make words or phrases parallel when we are writing things in a **list or series**, and each word must have the **same grammatical form**.

**For words**, nouns are balanced with nouns, adjectives with adjectives, verbs with verbs, gerunds with gerunds, and so on.

**For phrases**, prepositional phrases are balanced with prepositional phrases, infinitive phrases with infinitive phrases, and gerund phrases with gerund phrases.

The **coordinating conjunction** '*and*' is usually used to connect the parallel items, but other coordinating conjunctions such as '*or*' and '*nor*' may be used.

**Correlative conjunctions** such as '*both/and*', '*neither/nor*' and '*whether/or*' are also used as connectors.

## Examples of Parallel Structure

**Infinitives / Gerunds**

*She wants to go to England and studying at the London School of Economics.* ***(WRONG)***

*She wants to go to England and study at the London School of Economics.* ***(CORRECT)***

The first sentence is wrong because the first item in the list, *to go*, is an infinitive, but the second item, *studying*, is a gerund. In order to correct it, *studying* has been changed to an infinitive.

**Adverbs**

*John ensured that he gave his two minute talk confidently, effectively and persuasive.* ***(WRONG)***

*John ensured that he gave his two minute talk confidently, effectively and persuasively.* ***(CORRECT)***

The first sentence is incorrect as the last item in the series, *persuasive*, is an adjective, whereas the first two items are adverbs. The second sentence has been corrected by changing *persuasive* to the adverb, *persuasively*.

**Adjectives**

*The room was comfortable, airy, and it was not dirty.* ***(WRONG)***

*The room was comfortable, airy, and clean.* ***(CORRECT)***

The first sentence is incorrect, since the first two items in the series, *comfortable* and *airy*, are adjectives, whereas the last item, *it was not dirty*, contains a verb. The second sentence has been corrected by changing *it was not dirty* to the adjective *clean*.

**Infinitive Phrases**

*I can't decide whether to take a bus or riding my bicyle to work.* ***(WRONG)***

*I can't decide whether to take a bus or (to) ride my bicyle to work.* ***(CORRECT)***

The first sentence is wrong because an infinitive and gerund phrase have been mixed together. The second is correct because they are both infinitive phrases.

**Prepositional Phrases**

*He climbed the rock, up the wall, and onto the roof.* ***(WRONG)***

*He climbed over the rock, up the wall, and onto the roof.* ***(CORRECT)***

The first sentence is not parallel since the first word, *the rock*, does not have a preposition, but the next two words in the list have. It can be corrected by placing the correct preposition, *over*, before climbed.

# Passive Voice

In this grammar lesson we will look at the **passive voice**.

You may wonder why this is important for IELTS. Well firstly of course any grammar is important for IELTS.

Whenever you speak or write, or try to understand reading passages, you need to have the ability to use and understand a good range of grammar.

However, a way that the passive is specifically needed for IELTS is if you get a **process diagram** in Academic IELTS Task 1. In this case you will use it throughout your explanation of the process.

## What are the Active and Passive?

When we use the **active voice**, the subject is doing the action of the verb:

When we use the **passive voice**, the person or thing receiving the action becomes the subject:

| Active | Passive |
|---|---|
| *The dog bit the boy* | *The boy was bitten by the dog* |

## What are the Passive Voice Rules?

To make a sentence passive, we do three things:

1. ***Move the object*** *of the sentence, and make it the subject. The object thus becomes the subject (often we exclude the object because it is not important to the sentence).*

2. ***Add in "by"*** *before the new object (if you are including it in the new sentence)*

3. ***Add the verb "to be"*** *to the front of the verb, and change the verb to the past participle. You then have a passive voice verb. Remember to keep the tense the same.*

| Active | Passive |
|---|---|
| *The dog **(subject)** bit **(verb)** the boy **(object)*** | *The boy **(new subject)** was bitten **(new verb form)** by the dog **(new object)**.*<br><br>*The boy **(subject)** was bitten **(verb)**.* |

In this case the verb "*bit*" is in the past simple, so when it is made passive, the verb "*to be*" must be the past simple - "*was*".

## Passive Voice Examples

These are examples of how we form it with different tenses (without the object in the passive):

| Tense | Active | Passive |
|---|---|---|
| **Present** | I eat the food | The food is eaten |
| **Present Continuous** | I am eating the food | The food is being eaten |
| **Present Perfect** | I have eaten the food | The food has been eaten |
| **Past** | I ate the food | The food was eaten |
| **Past Continuous** | I was eating the food | The food was being eaten |
| **Past Perfect** | I had eaten the food | The food had been eaten |
| **Future** | I will eat the food | The food will be eaten |
| **Future Perfect** | I will have eaten the food | The food will have been eaten |
| **Present Modal** | I can eat the food | The food can be eaten |
| | I should eat the food | The food should be eaten |
| | I may eat the food | The food may be eaten |
| **Past Modals** | I could have eaten the food | The food could have been eaten |
| | I should have eaten the food | The food should have been eaten |
| | I may have eaten the food | The food may have been eaten |

## Gerunds and Infinitives

We can also use the passive voice for infinitive and gerund structures:

| Tense | Infinitive | Gerund |
|---|---|---|
| **Simple** | *to + be + Past Participle* | *Being + Past Participle* |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | She wanted **to be taken care of** | **Being taken care of** was wonderful. |
| **Perfect** | *to + have been + Past Participle*<br><br>She was happy **to have been chosen** | *having been + Past Participle*<br><br>She celebrated **having been chosen** |

## Transitive and Intransitive Verbs

However, you *cannot* use the passive with intransitive verbs.

Transitive verbs have to take an object. For example, you cannot say "*He discovered*". This is a transitive verb so it needs an object: " *He discovered a cure*".

So this can be made passive: "*A cure was discovered*".

Intransitive verbs are not followed by an object. For example, you can say "*He died*". Or it could be followed by an adverb: "*He died yesterday*".

But we cannot say: "*He was died*" or "*Yesterday was died he*".

## When do we use it?

It is much more common to use the active than the passive, so you should only use it if there is a **specific reason**. Below are are the reasons that we use it.

Remember that this is usually a matter of choice for you, depending on the context in which you are writing.

**1.** When you think the receiver of the action is more important than the doer of the action

| Interested in the doer | Interested in the action |
|---|---|
| *The farmer* harvested the corn in September | *The corn* was harvested in September |

**2.** When you think it is obvious who the doer is so it does not need to be mentioned

| An obvious subject | Omitting the doer |
|---|---|
| *The police* arrested the burglar | *The burglar* was arrested |

**3.** When the doer of the action is unknown or we don't want the doer to be known

| A known doer | An unknown doer |
|---|---|
| Jonathan stole Peter's phone | Peter's phone was stolen |

**4.** When you think the doer is irrelevant

| You feel it is relevant | You feel it is irrelevant |
|---|---|
| The manager will close the shop at 3pm | The shop will be closed at 5pm |

**5.** When you are writing for certain genres, such as science reports or for academic journals

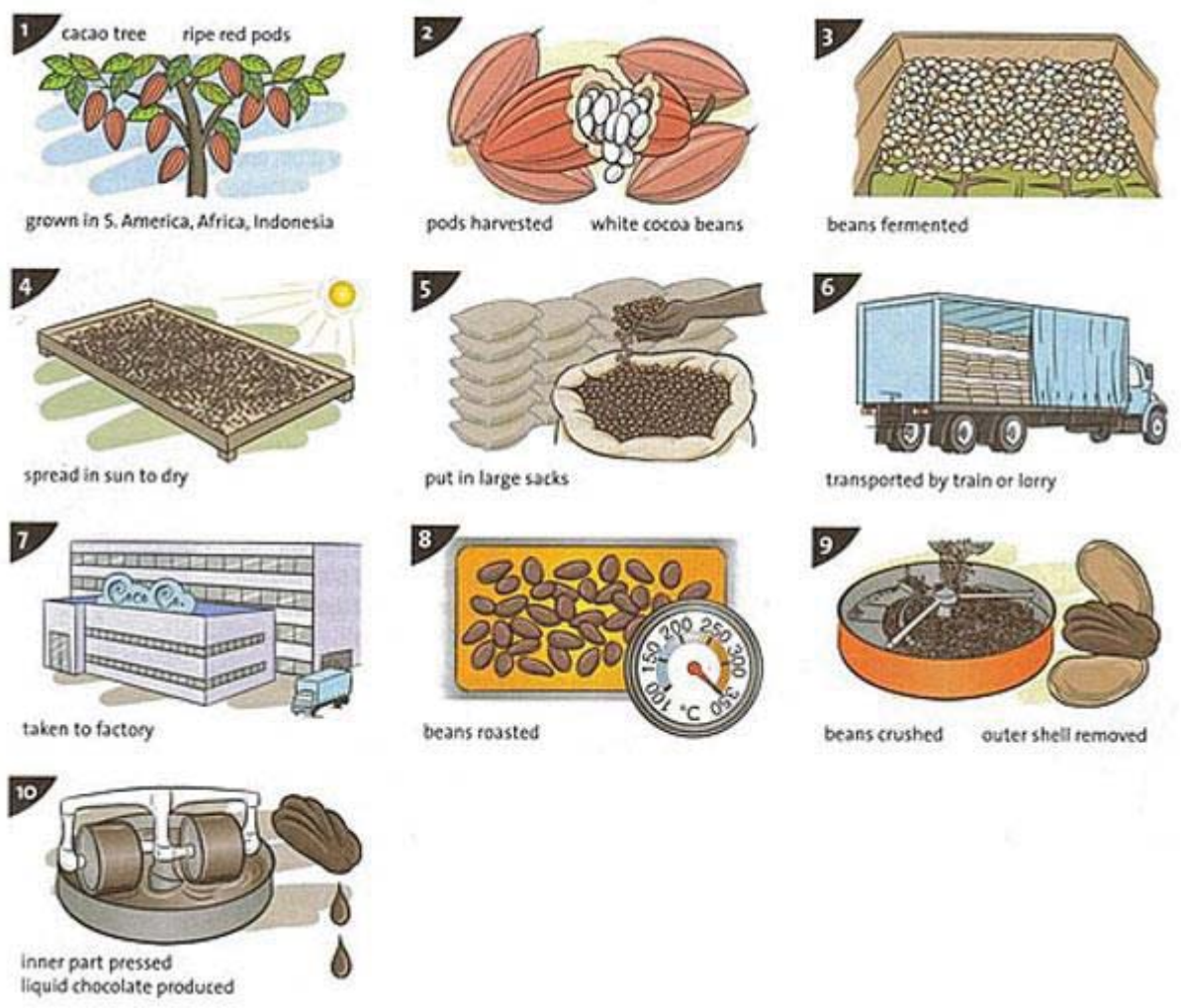
| Referring to the researcher | Anonymising the researcher |
|---|---|
| I can draw several conclusions from the results | Several conclusions can be drawn from the results |

## When do we use the passive voice for IELTS?

As it is just a part of general grammar, you may use it at any point in the speaking or writing.

The time when you will really be in trouble if you don't know how to use it is if you have to write about a process in Task 1 of Academic IELTS.

Here is an example of a process diagram, where you have to describe the process of making chocolate:




When we describe a process such as this, we are not interested in who does the activity, the "doer", we are interested in **the activity** itself.

So in order to emphasize this, the activities are used as the subjects. Check out this **model answer** - the passive voice has been highlighted.

**To begin, the cocoa comes from the cacao tree, which is grown in the South American and African continents and the country of Indonesia. Once the pods are ripe and red, they are harvested and the white cocoa beans are removed. Following a period of fermentation, they are then laid out on a large tray so they can dry under the sun. Next, they are placed into large sacks and delivered to the factory. They are then roasted at a temperature of 350 degrees, after which the beans are crushed and separated from their outer shell. In the final stage, this inner part that is left is pressed and the chocolate is produced.**